



Spark Gap

Vol. 36, Issue 5, May 2020 *MARC - Serving Central Indiana Communities for thirty-six years*

ON OUR MARC:

As you heard on the Sunday night net, our monthly meeting will be on the air again this month and right now I'm not sure if we will be meeting in June. REMC hasn't decided when they will open up the meeting room. When they do, things will be different for us. We will do what we need to do to get back to having our monthly meetings. I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy. It's a rough time for everyone. Hopefully, we will be back to the new normal soon!

Our speaker for this month will be Bob Jones, K9NJM, on weather. Bob will talk about the weather class that was held at the Sheriff's department in March and I'm sure he will have a lot of information for us.

A big thanks to those who played radio for the Indiana QSO party. I heard the bands we open for a while. This might be the only event for us this year. As of right now, the Strawberry Fest and Heartnut Fest have been canceled. I even heard that the Indianapolis Hamfest in July has been canceled. I haven't heard about Field Day yet but once we know for sure, we will let everyone know.

Hope you will join us on the air Saturday.

Jacki, K16QOQ, President

******* IMPORTANT *******

The officer's will hold a meeting on the air MARC Repeater 146.835 – (PL 151.4) this Saturday, May 16th at 9:00 AM.

Hope you can make it and hopefully you will have coffee. You have to supply your own donuts.





Birthdays for the month of May:

KC9GCH - Linda Harshbarger

N9QVO - David Craig

KU9V - Anthony Stokes

KA9QBF - Joseph Lovrini

SPECIAL COVID-19 NET

The Medical Net, a special COVID-19 net, is running Wednesdays, 0130 UTC, on 7.222 MHz. The net deals with correct data on COVID-19 epidemiology care, care issues, and more. Net control will be Dr. Harry Przekop, WB9EDP, a past president of the Medical Amateur Radio Council Organization (MARCO) and now a director at large. Przekop is a specialist in infectious diseases and biomedical physics and is board-certified as an expert in HIV care. Participants do not need to be physicians or medical providers to check in, ask questions, and otherwise take part, but no diagnoses can be rendered. The regular MARCO Grand Rounds Net is held on Sundays, 1500 UTC, on 14.342 MHz.



Thanks Jim, WB9GCV for the A10 flyover picture from Franklin on May 2nd.

INDIANA QSO PARTY

By Jack, W8ISH

MARC may have set a new record during the INQP contest. The Indiana QSO party is designed to get Hoosier Hams to make a contact in each of the 92 Indiana counties.

New INQP Stay-at-home rules prompted club VP Bruce Tisdale, K9ICP to organize a club contest group for the May 2nd radio contest. Since we were already quarantined why not stay home and play ham radio for the day.

Due to the Covid-19 quarantine the rules were revised for the 2020 Party eliminating all roving and portable stations around the state. This limited the number of possible county contacts. The Rovers traditionally



swept through counties with sparse ham involvement so others could score that county.

MARC operated under the new Distributed Multi-Multi (DMM) rule which allowed club members to use their call sign and operate from home. Bruce, K9ICP combined logs for a total club effort. Chris, KQ9Y used the club call sign from the Franklin Radio Room while Tim WC9G racked up contacts from his back porch.

The totals are not in but early indications are the SSB and CW totals for the 12-hour contest exceeded previous expectations. Those adding to the log were Bob, N9SIU, Jack W8ISH, Tim WC9G, Chris KQ9Y, Sam WA9BVG, Jim KB9JMU, Ron K9THR, Joe KZ9H and Bruce K9ICP.

Bruce reported a good 12-hour operation logging 35 counties, 47 states for a total of 519 contacts. Tim was second with 219 logged contacts. Everyone else contributed several dozen contacts each.



According to Bob, N9SIU he got off to a rough start. "I was starting to make some contacts when my desk mike decided the push to talk bar had to break. Having only one mike for that old rig I switched to QRP operating outside. Not a good day for me. It was fun while it lasted."

-Jack w8ish



A modest proposal (for the next Extra Class question pool)

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

At our last club meeting, I was discussing the changes to the Extra Class question pool with someone, and the topic of memorizing the answers popped up. As I always do, I mentioned that many of the questions you can only get right by memorizing the answer. At that point, someone down the way piped up. “Not me,” he said, “I studied the material so that I didn’t have to memorize the answers.”



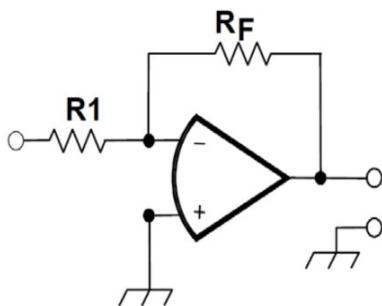
At that point, the president called the meeting to order, so I didn’t get to challenge him on that point, but that statement is just plain wrong. First of all, it’s true that some questions you can only get right by memorizing the answer. Almost all of the rules questions are that way, for example.

Secondly, there is no way to study the rest of the material in any depth and still have time to actually be an amateur radio operator. The amount of material that the Extra Class question pool covers takes an electrical engineering student four years or more to study thoroughly. And even then, some topics are bound to get short shrift.

So, we’re back to memorizing. I would say that even an “engaged” person will memorize about half the answers. I’d go even further and say that those that “study” the technical topics, don’t study it as thoroughly as a college student would.

For example, there are a dozen questions in Section E7G – Active filters and op-amp circuits: active audio filters; characteristics; basic circuit design; operational amplifiers. Despite the name, you don’t need to know how to design or build an op-amp filter. All you really need to know is that op-amps are high gain devices and if you have a circuit like the one shown below, $V_{out}/V_{in} = R_F/R_1$.

Figure E7-3



These concepts are relatively easy to learn. but there are also two questions on filter “ringing.” Honestly, you’re better off just memorizing the answers to those questions unless you have a real interest in active filters that use op amps. Wading into the mathematics isn’t all that hard, but when you consider this is only one of dozens of topics, you can see where doing any kind of in-depth study is going to take you months, if not years, to accomplish.

A modest proposal

The end result of this approach to testing is that we have many Extra Class licensees who know about a lot of things, but not in very much depth. Perhaps that's OK. Perhaps that's just what the question pool committee of the National Council of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (NCVEC) was shooting for. If, however, we want an Extra Class license to denote that the licensee has some real technical expertise, I have a modest proposal.

Basically, my idea is that instead of testing on an incredibly wide range of topics, we test applicants on a set of basics, plus one or two particular topics. These would be topics that the person has expertise in already or enough of an interest in to study the topic in some depth.

Below are the topics that I would consider to be basic and some that I consider to be more specialized. This is, of course, not an extensive list.

- Basic questions (20 questions, everyone takes this part of the exam)
 - Safety
 - Rules and regulations
 - Electrical principles/basic circuits
- Technical Interests (Choose two, 20 questions each)
 - Antennas and transmission lines
 - Radio wave propagation
 - EMI/RFI
 - Analog and digital design
 - Digital communications and networking
 - Software/software-defined radio
 - Operating: contests, DXing, direction finding, etc.
 - VHF/UHF

The questions in each of the technical interest question pools would be designed to really test the knowledge of the person taking the test. We'd have to figure out a way to make them difficult enough so that one couldn't just simply memorize the answer. Questions could appear in one or more technical interest test. For example, a question on VHF/UHF propagation could appear in both the Radio Wave Propagation and VHF/UHF question pools.

Having said all this, I realize that this would not be easy to implement. You'd have to first decide on the topics and then enlist experts for each of the topics and get them to come up with a list of 80 – 100 questions each.

I realize that this has very little chance of being adopted, but it's interesting to think about, no? And, we have four years to do this, so it could be possible.

=====

Dan Romanchik, KB6NU, is the author of the KB6NU amateur radio blog (KB6NU.Com), the “No Nonsense” amateur radio license study guides (KB6NU.Com/study-guides/), and often appears on the ICQPodcast (icqpodcast.com). When he's not thinking up ways to make the lives of the NCVEC question pool committee more difficult, he likes to build stuff and operate CW on the HF bands.

ARRL Suggests Taking a Creative Approach to Field Day 2020

This year, ARRL Field Day promises to be a unique iteration of this annual event, with many individuals and groups coming up with new and interesting ways to adjust their approach. As an event, Field Day is structured to be versatile and can be adapted for any situation.

Many groups have asked how they can adjust their Field Day planning to address social-distancing guidelines that may be in effect in many areas of the country, as gathering at their traditional Field Day site may not be feasible or safe.

Instead of participating in a group event this year, consider operating as a Class B, C, D, or E station, utilizing your own call sign.

ARRL will include club names for all participating stations in the published results, so the efforts of your club's members can be acknowledged. While we will not publish an aggregate club score, seeing the name of your club associated with various individual member's results is certainly a way to highlight your club's activity.



Myriad opportunities are possible in this year's Field Day setting. A few options are as follows:

- Consider having an intra-club competition among members, seeing who can make the most contacts during the event. You can award prizes or distribute certificates at a club meeting. This can be a fun way to bolster the activities of individual club members, even though they cannot all gather together at the same location this year.
- Set up a Field Day Challenge with rival clubs in neighboring communities. See how many members of each club get on the air from their own stations and participate in the event. In addition to "bragging rights," perhaps certificates to the top-scoring individual entries in each category can be presented as part of this inter-club camaraderie.

One club is planning to conduct its Field Day as a 4A club group, with participants spaced to comply with social distancing guidelines within the required 1,000-foot-diameter circle and operating individual stations. This club also plans to set up a "Get on the Air" (GOTA) station. The club's plan is to have the GOTA coach at the Field Day site, while GOTA operators participate via remote link.

Another club is planning to set up a remote-controlled station at its usual Field Day site, with club members taking turns controlling the station from their homes. The club is developing a schedule that outlines when each member of the club will be at the helm via the remote link.

Whatever approach you take to this year's Field Day, keep up to date with the current guidelines issued by local and state health agencies that may impact your proposed operation.

For the latest news and updates, visit the [Field Day webpage](#). -- Thanks to ARRL Contest Program Manager Paul Bourque, N1SFE



MARC Meeting

May 16, 2020

Conversation led by:

Bob - kc9njm

Topics

- Review of the Apr. 8, 2020 weather net
 - <https://www.weather.gov/ind/Apr082020SyWx>
 - Thoughts, suggestions, discussion
- Tour of the NWS Indy website
 - <https://www.weather.gov/ind/>
 - <https://www.weather.gov/ind/spotter>
- Tour of NOAA Prediction Centers websites
 - SPC <https://www.spc.noaa.gov/>
 - WPC <https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/index.php?page=ovw>
- Useful Apps
 - RadarScope
 - MyRadar
 - Weather Underground, TWC, Storm
 - Dark Sky (iOS only on 7/1/20)
 - NWS Now
 - Windy
 - Locals - WISH, WRTV, WTHR, Weather Authority (Chs. 4, 59)

ARRL at Home Hamvention" Weekend of Specials Set

For the first time in its 68-year history, [Dayton Hamvention](#)[®] will not take place, due to concerns about the coronavirus outbreak. ARRL understands that many members will miss going to Hamvention, which is always an occasion to catch up with friends, explore new products, and connect with ARRL via our Expo in the exhibit area.

While we can't be together in Dayton in 2020, ARRL has put together a weekend of specials to bring a bit of the Hamvention spirit and excitement to members during what would have been Dayton Hamvention weekend, May 14 - 17. On the [ARRL at Home Hamvention](#) page, members will find a special message from ARRL President Rick Roderick, K5UR; new membership premiums; the latest products; clearance merchandise, and our "ARRL at Hamvention" button. All who make weekend purchases will receive a free ARRL button with their order, while supplies last.



Visit the [ARRL at Home Hamvention](#) page to check out all the offerings.

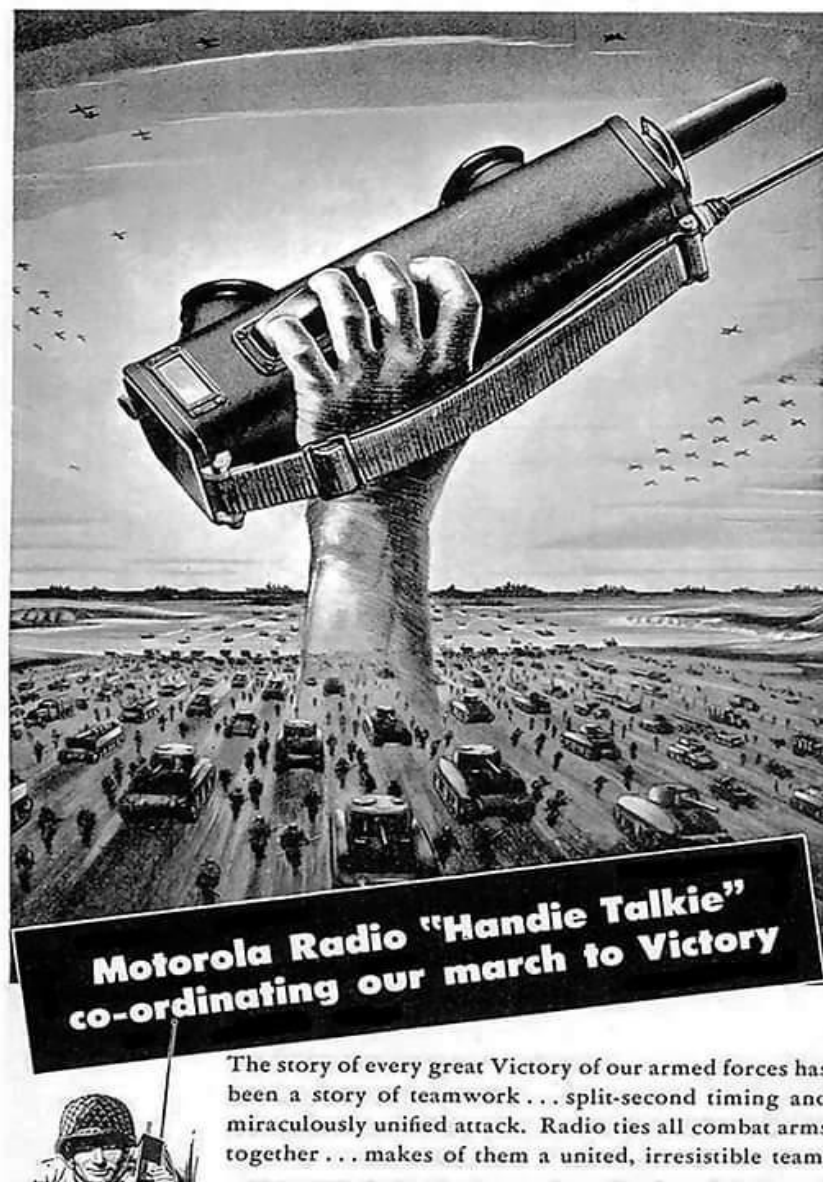
Just Ahead in Radiosport

- May 16 -- Feld Hell Sprint
- May 16 -- UN DX Contest (CW, phone)
- May 16 - 17 -- NZART Sangster Shield Contest (CW)
- May 16 - 17 -- His Majesty King of Spain Contest, CW
- May 16 - 17 -- Aegean RTTY Contest
- May 16 - 18 -- Portuguese Navy Day Contest (CW, phone)
- May 17 -- Run for the Bacon QRP Contest (CW)
- May 18 -- RSGB FT4 Contest Series
- May 21 -- NAQCC CW Sprint
- May 21 -- QRP Minimal Art Session (CW)

See the [ARRL Contest Calendar](#) for more information. For in-depth reporting on amateur radio contesting, subscribe to *The ARRL Contest Update* via your ARRL member profile email preferences.

UP – COMING ACTIVITIES AND HAMFESTS

Everything ham radio related has been canceled for the foreseeable future. The COVID-19 has taken its toll on HAM activities. As soon as there is something to post here about hamfests or other activities it will be listed here. Hang in there and stay safe and get on the air. There is nothing preventing us from having a good time with our radios. Hopefully we may be able to have ARRL Field Day 2020 in some sort of way for our communities.



WW II Motorola Handie Talkie advertisement.



MID-STATE AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

The Mid-State Amateur Radio Club meets the **THIRD SATURDAY** of each month at the Johnson County REMC 750 International Drive Franklin, IN 46131.

See our website, www.midstatehams.org, for maps on how to get to our meeting.

Everyone is welcome; you do not have to be a *HAM* to attend our meetings or a member of the club.

W9MID Repeater:

146.835/
146.235 MHz
(151.4 Hz PL Tone)

Club Officers:

President: Jacki Frederick – KI6QOG
Vice President: Bruce Tisdale – K9ICP
Secretary: Chris Read – W9OQ
Treasurer: Chris Mazzarella – KC9VGQ
Repeater Trustee - Chris Frederick – KQ9Y

W9MID Repeater:

443.525/
448.525 MHz
(151.4 Hz PL Tone)

Weekly Net: Sunday evening 7:00 PM ARES/RACES members and ALL RADIO AMATEURS
146.835/146.235 MHz (151.4 Hz PL Tone)

The Official Newsletter of the Mid-State Amateur Radio Club

P.O. Box 836
Franklin, Indiana
46131

Spark Gap Editor: Robert LaGrange N9SIU

Please send your articles to my email: n9siu@yahoo.com no later than the 2nd week of the month.



Special thanks to Johnson County REMC for the use of their community room for meetings and testing.